

Afterword, July 19, 1989:

A few days before Bryan Willson began his fast on the tracks at Concord Naval Weapons Station on September 1, 1987, he explained his reason in a letter to the base commander:

"One truth seems clear: Once the train carrying the munitions moves past our human blockade, if it does, other human beings in other parts of the world will be killed and maimed. We are not worth more. They are not worth less."

Since then my Nicaraguan grandson, Julio Daniel, has had his fourth birthday, and has been joined this spring by a little sister, Anna Carolina. Their lives, and their mother's, are worth more to me than my own; and I continue to be thankful to all the North Americans who have acted courageously and effectively to avert the invasion of Nicaragua by our own country.

The non-violent resistance campaign in which Willson was taking part was, and is, called Nuremberg Actions. The name is meant to remind Americans of the Nuremberg Principle: the responsibility of individuals to refuse to participate in--and as Willson and others interpret it, the responsibility to obstruct--illegal programs of their own state such as terrorism and aggression.

That principle is part of our laws. But it has not been widely honored in the US since this interview first appeared.

Despite convincing evidence that the logistical support system for the contras was organized--in violation of the Boland Amendment--in Vice President Bush's office, by his ex-CIA assistant Donald Gregg, Bush still maintains that he was unaware that all about him were breaking the laws he had sworn to execute.

Yet Bush is now President, having campaigned largely on a promise to take the pledge of allegiance to the flag more seriously than he had taken his oath to uphold and protect the Constitution.

Meanwhile, flaunting regional agreements and World Court rulings on international law, Congress continues to fund the contras, who persist in acts of terrorism though on a reduced scale. Likewise, by act of Congress, taxpayers finance and arm state terror in El Salvador, now openly ruled by the party of the death squads.

Oliver North, convicted of deceiving Congress, has escaped a jail sentence, on the peculiar judgment that prison would not correct his misunderstanding of our constitutional system. Instead he has been sentenced to 1200 hours of community service in a drug-abuse program, where it is reportedly hoped he will

2

serve as a "role model" to youth, perhaps in a ghetto supplied with drugs by the logistical network he and Gregg set up. (Gregg has been named by Bush as Ambassador to South Korea).

As another federal judge put it, sentencing North's associate, the contra fundraiser Spitz Channell, to probation and a \$50 court fee, it was difficult to decide on a sentence "when crimes have been committed by those who are so firmly dedicated to the interest of this country as they see it."

And in the same two weeks, a Navy admiral overruled a lower recommendation to suspend the train crew that, with a clear view of Willson on the tracks hundreds of yards ahead and with time to stop, had instead speeded up the train to several times the legal limit. He ruled against any punishment or reprimand, on the ground that the crew had no reason to suppose that someone would stay seated in the path of an oncoming train.

Nevertheless, the trains no longer run on time at the Concord Naval Weapons Station. The crews have learned a reason not to speed through any more when there are people on the track; and there have been people on the track every day since September 1, 1987.

Every train attempting to move munitions on the base since then has had to wait while police moved and arrested Americans attempting to obstruct, with their bodies, crimes financed with their taxes in Central America.

The trains do get through, as trains moved past human blockades in Oakland in the '60's. But there has been a learning effect, from activism like Nuremberg Actions and the Pledge of Resistance, and still more from the experience of Vietnam: when many millions of white North Americans learned the unwillingness of people of a different color under a different flag to get out of the way of an oncoming juggernaut, to "say uncle" in their own country in the path of invading U.S. troops and bombers.

The difference between Concord in 1989 and Oakland in 1967 is that the trains being obstructed now are not, yet, troop trains. They don't have U.S. combat units in them, carrying the flag to Nicaragua or El Salvador or the Philippines. That is in large part because officials know that if they ever do, there will be more people on the tracks than it took to stop the Vietnam War.